

REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated December 3, 2002. Claims 1-3 and 7 are now presented for examination. Claims 4-6 and 8, which were withdrawn from consideration as directed to a non-elected invention, have been cancelled without prejudice to their being presented in a divisional application. Claims 1 and 7 are the remaining independent claims. Favorable review is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3 and 7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Miller (U.S. Pat. No. 6,101,481) in view of Rassman et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,937,743). The applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claims 1 and 7 are patentable over the art cited by the Examiner, for the following reasons.

The present invention, as defined in claim 1, is directed to a method in which each user of an automated system is assigned an identifier, and a security profile is prepared corresponding to each identifier; the security profiles includes a set of authorized transactions. The method also includes the steps of preparing a list of pairs of incompatible transactions, in accordance with predetermined rules; comparing each security profile with the list; and generating a report indicating those security profiles including incompatible transactions. Similarly, claim 7 is directed to a computer-readable medium having stored therein instructions for performing a method including retrieving a security profile and a list of pairs of incompatible transactions. Each security profile is compared with the list and a report is generated, as in the method of claim 1.

It is thus a feature of the present invention that (1) there are predetermined rules governing business conduct; (2) a list is prepared, in accordance with those rules, of pairs of incompatible transactions; and (3) user security profiles which include incompatible transactions are identified and reported.

Miller is understood to disclose a task management system in which a task controller is identified as responsible for a given task, and details of the task are shared between two or more people. However, according to Miller, only those people who are directly involved in a task should see the details of that task (col. 11, lines 65-67). Those not involved in a given task would be "locked out"—not permitted to see the details of a task (col. 12, lines 3-9). Miller's

concern for "security" evidently involves unauthorized viewing of a task's details by other users of the system. It should be noted that Miller does not address the problem of a given user being responsible for incompatible tasks. Indeed, Miller makes no suggestion that tasks or users are subject to predetermined rules of business conduct; Miller does not envision a system in which a given user should not be permitted to perform certain tasks in view of such rules.

One following the teaching of Miller would introduce "security" into a system by enabling a user to hide details of a given tasks from another user—thereby "locking out" the latter user. Miller does not disclose or suggest any criteria or rules under which a given user should be prevented from performing a given task. In the present invention, by contrast, a "security profile" includes a set of transactions for which a user is authorized, and predetermined rules govern a list of incompatible transactions. The term "security" clearly has different meanings in the Miller reference and in the specification of the invention.

The Examiner is correct in stating that Miller lacks specific teaching regarding the steps of preparing a list of incompatible transactions, comparing each security profile with the list, and generating a report. The applicants wish to point out that Miller also does not suggest any method having such steps, since Miller does not suggest rules governing business conduct which give rise to incompatible transactions.

Accordingly, the above-described features of the present invention are neither taught nor suggested by Miller, so that the present invention would not have been obvious from that reference.

Rassman et al. is understood to disclose a resource management system in which a database is provided having information about the resources, and availability of the resources is monitored and displayed as a function of time. Rassman et al. suggests (col. 3, lines 2-21) that the system may be used to automatically adjust schedules in the event of scheduling conflicts. Rassman et al. does not teach or suggest that tasks or transactions may be conflicting or incompatible because of rules governing business conduct. In particular, Rassman et al. does not suggest that a user of the system might have a security profile including a set of authorized transactions. Accordingly, Rassman et al. does not teach or suggest the above-noted features of the present invention.

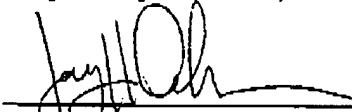
A combination of Miller and Rassman et al. would at best yield a system in which users would be delegated tasks or assigned to teams for performing tasks, and in which those users could monitor the availability of various resources and coordinate their use. It should be emphasized that in the cited references, the question of whether a given user should perform a given transaction is a matter of whether the user has been assigned a task (Miller) or a matter of whether appropriate resources are available (Rassman et al.). Neither of the references, considered alone or in combination, suggests preparing a list of incompatible transactions in accordance with predetermined rules governing business conduct, as in the present invention. Accordingly, the present invention would not have been obvious from either of the cited references, or from a combination thereof.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the applicants respectfully request favorable consideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

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Respectfully submitted,


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